

The Jockey Had Been Punished for His Honesty, But Victory Was Finally Won By a Friend.

THE FEEDBOX FOOL

BY
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"HAVE you called a doctor?" the Feedbox Fool asked his sister-in-law, Jenny Hall.

"Yes, and he's been here and gone," Jenny Hall replied.

"What does he say?" The Feedbox Fool lowered his voice so that his brother, little Johnny Hall, in bed in the next room, might not hear.

"Pneumonia," Jenny said, in a half whisper. "And maybe typhoid too."

"Gosh!" muttered Feedbox. "We'll have to be sure this doctor knows his stuff. I'll get a nurse."

"You will not," said the girl, positively. "I'll take care of him myself."

Feedbox stared at her in amazement. "But it's a twenty-four hour job," said Feedbox. "And, besides, . . ."

"Makes no difference," she declared. "And, besides," Feedbox continued, "we've got to have a trained nurse. But the first thing is to get the doctor back here."

"I suppose you know these things cost money," complained Jenny, bitterly. "And we're not millionaires."

"I want to take care of Johnny, and I've got to," Feedbox replied.

"We should worry about the dough," retorted Feedbox, airily. "He had nine dollars and some odd cents in his pocket. I'll take care of that."

He went softly into the bedroom to see the boy, but came out again in a moment. Johnny Hall was out of his bed. Feedbox found Jenny Hall in the kitchenette trying to improvise an ice pack. "I'm going out to find that doctor and see about a nurse," he said.

"Never mind about the nurse," she replied, dully. "But before you go, do you know what could have given Johnny that terrible cold?"

"Why, hasn't he said anything?" "Only when he was out of his mind. All he has been saying for the last three hours is that he wouldn't do it. Keeps repeating it," she said. "What was it?"

Feedbox looked at the girl wonderingly. "Don't he ever tell you anything about his work?"

She shook her head. "Well, he is in trouble," said Feedbox slowly. "He rides, or did, for Willoughby Tobin. Made good, see? Tobin tells him yesterday to lay back with a horse of his that's a runnin' fool. Pull him, he says. Muddy track, cold, and raining. The kid hates to pull the goat, and don't pull him very hard. Nobody else that can win wants to, and half a dozen hounds slides all over the track in the stretch tryin' to keep from gettin' to the wire first, see? The kid's horse finally wins, but it looks bad. Terrible. The crowd squawks, and the judges send for three of the jocks. The kid says Tobin tells him to pull, and he won't, see? So they send for Tobin. But Tobin talked 'em out of it. And they fined the kid."

"Mr. Tobin ought to be shot," said Jenny Hall, calmly. "But what I asked you was, how did Johnny catch this cold?"

"I'm tellin' you," continued the Feedbox Fool. "The judges kept him up there in that windy, raw stand, soakin' wet, with nothin' on but his ridin' silks. I told him to get him some liquor, steam-up and go to bed."

"He wouldn't do it," commented Jenny Hall. "He thought I wouldn't like for him to use the whisky. Said he'd be all right and now I've got to try to break up his fever. The doctor said an ice pack would help."

"If there's nothing I can do," the Feedbox Fool said, helplessly. "I'll go see the doc and get a nurse. Be back this evening."

He hunted up the physician and impressed him bravely with the necessity of doing everything possible and demanded a good nurse.

Back again at the apartment that evening, the Feedbox Fool was unable to hide his depression.

"Might as well tell you the news," he said grudgingly when Jenny had a free moment. "But don't say anything to the kid."

"Johnny's still delirious," she replied. "Wouldn't understand anything."

"Well, this Tobin went before the stewards today and had the kid set down, and his license took away from him, and him barred from the track."

"Why, he couldn't do that," she protested. "But he did. The kid's done," Feedbox declared laconically.

FOLLOWED a long, hard pull for Johnny Hall, his small wife Jenny, and the Feedbox Fool. Pneumonia paved the way to a more serious struggle with typhoid, and it was six months before Johnny Hall was on his feet again. The Feedbox Fool worked earlier and later to gather in money. But at the end of the first month he had to leave town to ply his trade, because the ponies moved to Louisville.

When he allowed the runners to Fort Erie, and stayed a month, sending money orders to Jenny every week.

Back from Fort Erie for a few days before an excursion to the Maryland tracks, Feedbox made sure everything was all right.

"What's the doc say?" he asked Jenny, after a visit with the boy. "Nothing," she replied evasively. "How come? When was he here last?" Feedbox demanded.

"About three weeks ago," said Jenny. "I told him not to come unless I sent for him. No use for us to go on throwing away money that's not ours," she continued defiantly. "And that's not all. I've been talking to Johnny about your business, and he's found out all about it."

"Yeah?" queried the Feedbox Fool. "Well, I've found out one thing," she flashed. "You must be crazy. You provide information about horses and get money for it—isn't that right?"

"Yeah, that's a hot way to put it," Feedbox grinned.

"Then you take that money and turn right around and gamble with it, and, more than likely, lose it. Isn't that right?" she demanded persistently.

"Sure, but what's the use of bein' inside if you don't take advantage of it?" he countered. "What's the good of hunches if you don't play 'em?"

"Let the other fellows play 'em," she said.

The Feedbox Fool could only pause in his argument with his mouth open to try to fathom this idea.

"Every guy that ever cleaned up did it that way," he protested weakly. "But how many of them did not

clean up?" she retorted. "Why not keep the money?"

"Aw, what's the use of the dough?" he asked, sheepishly. He had never thought of his game as a business. His position crumbled. The whole works quit on him. Blew.

"How many tips do you sell and for how much every day?" Jenny Hall pursued, relentlessly.

"Oh, all the way from one to half a dozen, once to a dozen times a piece, five to ten berries a throw," he admitted. "I reckon I drag in seventy-five or a hundred iron men on a fair afternoon."

"If it was seventy-five and you kept it six days a week you'd be making \$450 a week," Jenny Hall pointed out. "Do you know anybody who makes as much?"

The Feedbox Fool fumbled for an answer, but found none. But he could not get the idea out of his head. On the train bound for Baltimore he thought it over and resolved to give Jenny's idea a try.

The Feedbox Fool became a militant crusader in search of money. His takings ranged from \$30 to \$150 a day. And he bet not a cent, even on the best of the good things he peddled.

This crazy hunch of Jenny's made him a better picker. It made him more careful in selling the ponies he picked. Presently overtook him. He sent money orders to Jenny Hall, ostensibly for Johnny's support and her own, but in reality because he didn't know what else to do with the money.

Then, long before he left the Maryland tracks for the fall campaign in Kentucky, Jenny wrote him a letter, saying that she had saved the money and had plenty to take care of Johnny for some time to come. Johnny was better, and in a few weeks more would be looking for a job, provided he didn't have a setback.

THE Feedbox Fool pocketed his money until he couldn't very well carry it any longer, and then he bought Sweet Lady, handsome, undersized bay mare, nine years old. She lost three shoes in a row for him and got some money out of a fourth. She developed sore feet and had to be laid up. When he pulled out of Maryland for home early in the fall, leaving Sweet Lady to be shipped with his friend Tom Appleton to the Kentucky, the Feedbox Fool was flat again. The Appleton was more natural than comfortable.

Jenny Hall met him at the door of the flat. "He's down again," she said. Courage shined in her strong blue eyes, but lines framed her mouth and eyes. "He went out to look for a job. Found one in the shipping room of the Crescent Corporation, indoors. Then the Crescent—"

"That's one of Tobin's companies," Feedbox interrupted. "But it wouldn't make any difference."

"Except it did," said Jenny. "You can talk to Johnny in a minute. Doctor's in there now. This Mr. Tobin came through the plant on an inspection trip and saw Johnny at work. Working hard, he was. Sweating, he said. Tobin stopped, and ordered Johnny put out. I guess Johnny must have talked back, because Mr. Tobin gave him a shove and knocked him down. That didn't hurt him—"

"That guy's gonna get killed," Feedbox declared, under his breath. "But the trouble got him so worked up he's had a relapse. Coughing and has fever again."

The doctor came out of the bedroom and closed the door behind him. In a few words he explained that the boy was in the early stages of the real plague. Complete rest, freedom from worry, good air, good food, he said, would combine to help him. If they could take him to California, and keep him outdoors, after he had regained some strength

"Oh, sure, sure," said the Feedbox Fool. He had not told Jenny Hall he was broke. "But you'll look after him until he's over this setback right now, won't you, doc? When he's better, we'll take him to the coast. See?"

Things broke badly for the Feedbox Fool. Johnny hovered on the verge of a serious, final illness. Jenny's strength ebbed, although Feedbox found a nurse to do most of the work. He moved his hat and suit case to the flat, and slept, sitting up, in the living-dining room.

At midnight he woke and relieved the nurse who napped until 3, when Feedbox took his departure for the track to watch the early workouts. His tips began to go good and his customers piled him hard. The takings grew again.

"Here's where we start building our stakes for California," he said, airily, to Jenny Hall in Johnny's room. "All bills paid except Sweet Lady's feed bill."

"Whatcha gonna do with 'at mare?" asked Johnny, wanly.

"I'm gonna start her in a race one of these days," Feedbox declared, "and give her one more chance to earn her oats. After that if I can't do anything else with her you and I and Jenny, there, will climb on her back and stand for California. Although," he added, with a twinkle in his eye, "you oughtn't ride even a bad horse to death."

THE Feedbox Fool had an exercise boy working Sweet Lady, and she responded to training. Her feet were still sore, but the Fool noticed that after going gingerly for three-quarters she pounded the sores out and sprinted the last quarter like a Runnymede. Two weeks later, flush, though seriously guarding his funds, he decided to start the mare.

When the stewards turned down his application for an owner's license because of objection on the part of Willoughby his pride was hurt.

"What's the matter?" he demanded, aggressively, of Appleton, who had vouched for him. "Ain't I been on the level? Ain't I been around this track fifteen years, with never a squawk against me? If I'd pulled the stuff this Tobin pulled I'd never yip. And him kickin' me?"

Appleton admitted his information was to that effect.

"Well, all I've got to say is I'll get that bird—get him good," declared the Feedbox Fool. He asked Appleton to enter Sweet Lady for him under the Appleton colors, in the



"HERE'S WHERE WE START BUILDING OUR STAKES FOR CALIFORNIA," THE FOOL SAID AIRILY.

mile-and-a-half race he had in mind. Before he could take off his hat that evening Jenny Hall handed him a slip of paper. The landlords found it necessary to increase the rent and requested the tenant to call at the company office immediately to make adjustments.

There was time to reach the office before it closed, so the Feedbox Fool went out again. When he returned Feedbox boiled with a bitter, resentful rage.

"What did they do?" asked Jenny. "Raise the rent much?"

"Oh, not a whole lot," said Feedbox. "But say, Johnny, I wish you could come out to the track and see this mare of mine run. She's—"

"How much did they raise the rent?" Jenny demanded.

"Not much," Feedbox lied. "This mare is a bird."

"Hope she loses," said Johnny slowly. "Unless old man Tobin has a horse in there with her. Like to see her beat him to death. But you can't afford a horse."

"I can afford anything," declared the Feedbox Fool, with a flourishing gesture.

"Next morning at daybreak the Feedbox Fool was at the track. The first man he saw was Tom Appleton. "News for you," Appleton said. "Put in your mare for that race and found your old friend is starting one in it."

"What's he startin'?" asked the Feedbox Fool, suddenly alert. "Big black horse."

"Calls him Nitromite," Feedbox commented.

"Wants to ready him for the big handicap and counts on winnin' this race in a walk," said Appleton, completing his explanation. "That's him now."

Feedbox reached for his watch as Nitromite pounded past them. He timed the horse by quarters for the full mile. When the boy took his mount off the track Feedbox put up his watch.

"Way he always runs," Feedbox told himself. "A runaway the first three-quarters and has to be pushed the rest of the way."

"Here comes our little mare," said Appleton aloud. "I told the boy to give her the full mile and a half, and to let her run all the way. Tomorrow I'll have him do the same and next morning give her a gallop."

"Yeah," assented the Feedbox Fool. "Save her feet. I getcha."

Sweet Lady did her work nicely under the Fool's clocking. Soreness that was evident at the start seemed to bother her not at all as she finished. "Reg'lar runnin' fool," observed Feedbox.

"Ever get them sore feet cured up?" she'd give anybody's horse a run," agreed Tom Appleton. "Any distance, for money, marbles or chalk."

"Even if she's nine years old and oughta know better," said the Feedbox Fool.

As he spoke another horse passed down the track, and Feedbox rubbed his eyes in amazement.

"What's a big idea?" he demanded of Appleton. "That kid gonna run her another mile, or what?"

"I didn't tell you," Appleton replied, laughing. "It's a wise owner that knows his own horse. That's not your mare out there, but a colt of hers. Four-year old, called Bittersweet, belongin' to a fellow from over in Ohio."

"Looks more like her twin than her son," commented Feedbox, relieved. "That's not all," said Appleton. "This colt's thrown in the same race you're startin' your mare in. How's that for high?"

"Mother and son battlin' it out,"

he mused Feedbox. He stayed at the hall to see Bittersweet through its workout. "Runs just like his mother," thought Feedbox. "Eases along the first half and runs the second. Way real horses run."

NEXT morning Feedbox again saw Nitromite, Sweet Lady and Bittersweet work, and saw the same performances repeated. That evening, with the race two days off, Feedbox accidentally bumped into little Terry Morgan, first-string jockey for the Tobin stable.

"Hi, Terry," greeted Feedbox. "Rotten," growled Terry. "Smatter?" Feedbox queried.

"Feelin' bum," said Terry. "Got the rheumatism, bad."

"So? Where's it bother you?" "Shoulders and arms the worst."

"That's tough luck," Feedbox commiserated. "Reckon you don't feel like ridin' anything that needs a pull these days?"

"Pull? Say, Feedbox, I couldn't pull anything."

"Oughta lay off."

"Fat chance! When old man Tobin hires a jock to ride, at jock rides, all time," said Terry.

The Feedbox Fool went on home to ed Walter Willoughby Tobin, ungraciously.

"At's right," agreed Feedbox, smiling. "Sorry. But maybe I can do you a good turn. Got anything in the next race?"

"Nothing but the winner," retorted Walter Willoughby Tobin.

"You haven't got the winner, unless somebody's been readin' my mind," exclaimed the Feedbox Fool. "I'm the only guy on the grounds that's got the lay. Absolutely."

"What is it?" snapped young Tobin. "Make it quick."

"Sweet Lady, to win. I know her trainer," Feedbox declared earnestly. "Nothing to it," said Tobin. "You're crazy. Nitromite wins this next race."

"He ought to, but he won't," Feedbox argued. "We've got this thing framed, I tell you. I now Nitromite's jock, see? He's gonna pull the black horse, see? I'm tellin' you."

"What's that?" asked Tobin, in surprise.

"I'm sayin' Nitromite oughta win, but he won't, get me? Sweet Lady's in, right now. Lemme sell you Sweet Lady."

YOUNG WALTER WILLOUGHBY TOBIN stared at the Feedbox Fool in amazement. Nitromite was in with a bunch of dogs, and should walk home. His dad told him so, and he had more money to bet. But, on the other hand, suppose this kid knew what he was talking about. If Terry Morgan pulled Nitromite—well, it was a lovely chance to put one over on the old man. The Feedbox Fool read his thoughts.

"Nobody knows this but me, and one other guy, see?" said Feedbox, in his best fawning manner. "I'm not saying who. It ain't Mister Tobin."

"Been peddlin' this everywhere?" Tobin asked sharply.

"Only one other guy's got it," declared Feedbox positively, thinking of Appleton.

"All right, then, I'm on," said young Tobin, reaching a hand into his pocket. "Here's a ten, and listen—"

"Yeah?" queried Feedbox. "Another ten. How about it?"

"You're on," Feedbox agreed, taking the second ten.

Feedbox hastened off in search of a certain plunging bookmaker to whom he proposed a little combination bet. A hundred to one, the bookie thought, would about size the thing up. Feedbox gave him the two Tobin tens for two tickets written at that price. Then he hurried over the rail near the judges' stand.

About the same time, young Tobin, with his pockets full of mutual tickets on Sweet Lady, joined his father and a group of friends. The elder Tobin let out a tremendous guttural when the boy told him how he had bet. The youngster stubbornly declared he knew what he was doing, and hinted that the race was fixed, via Terry Morgan, to pull Nitromite. This elder Tobin's yell changed from amusement to anger. He demanded to know who said so, and the boy told. Tobin charged down to the rail by the judges' stand to be close at hand.

Across the track, where the barrier was up for the start of the mile-and-a-half struggle, only the jockey caps told Feedbox which was his mare and which was Bittersweet. Both stood quietly awaiting the word. He could see the great black Nitromite charging against the webbing time after time. When one of the track men finally helped Terry pull the big horse down to a standstill, three other

starters, all of them contemptuously described by Feedbox as hopheads, caused a turmoil. The drugs that set these three afire delayed the start.

Then the barrier flew up and the race was on.

"Just like I thought," muttered Feedbox half aloud. "Hope I get these Tobins. Gotta win."

He could see, at the far turn, the gigantic Nitromite pounding to the fore. Close behind him flattered the three hopheads. Starting slowly and already three lengths back were Sweet Lady and Bittersweet, galloping along side by side.

Standing on tiptoe, he kept his eye on the big black. But when the horses came pounding past the last sixteenth post the Feedbox Fool shifted his scrutiny from Nitromite to little Terry Morgan, up aloft.

"I knew it, I knew it," whispered the Fool to himself. "The kid's all in. He's riddled with that big brute until he's done. Horse's run away with him and Terry can't hold him."

Sweet Lady and Bittersweet, running side by side, running easily and freely, it is true, still were running in the rack, now six lengths back.

"But there's a mile to go," thought the Feedbox Fool. "And a lot can happen in four quarters."

Down to the turn they rushed, Nitromite holding his long lead, the three hopheads dropping back. Six lengths still separated the black and the two bays, mother and son, as they swung around the turn to the back stretch. Strung out in the straightaway, the three continued their rushing game. And then the Fool's heart leaped within him.

"Terry's lookin' back, Terry's lookin' back," he exulted. "He knows the horse is through. He knows it."

FROM that moment the Fool gave his attention to the little bay mare and her rugged son. The boy on Bittersweet let the colt have his head and the bay four-year-old took the bit in his teeth. Sweet Lady held her clip, running smoothly, and swung along a length behind the colt. To the half they went in that order. But when they passed that mark Bittersweet was only three lengths behind Nitromite and the mare four.

Whirling up alongside on the last turn, the boy on Bittersweet began his ride to race Nitromite into the ground.

"The colt's on top!" yelled the railbirds.

Bittersweet rushed to the fore, a neck in front, before Nitromite could answer his challenge under Terry Morgan's whip. Nitromite charged up to even terms again, and so the pair came glancing down the stretch, head and head. The crowd arose to cheer the battle.

But where was Sweet Lady? Young Tobin asked himself the question as he peered at the track. The Feedbox Fool knew the answer.

"She'll come through on the inside," gloated the Fool. "Terry will ride off the colt and the mare will take 'em both at the wire. She's

slippin' through now. She's comin', she's comin'."

There was the mare through the breach at the rail as Terry Morgan swung Nitromite wide to force Bittersweet out.

She fairly flew with a light, lithe stride that contrasted widely with the heavy labored pounding of the great black horse. At the sixteenth she thrust her nose to the fore. The jockey on the colt realized too late that his race was with her instead of the big black horse. Bittersweet shot after her as Nitromite faltered in his stride. The flying mare swept under the wire a neck to the good. Tobin's Nitromite finished half a length behind the colt.

The crowd forgot the money it had placed on Nitromite and gave the mare and the colt a tremendous ovation.

Old man Tobin, red of face and red of eye, went charging up the steps to the judges' loft. The judges withheld announcement of the order of finish.

"Hey, Tom," said Feedbox, plucking at the trainer's shoulder. "I think they'll want you up here."

Tom waited. In a moment a messenger came through the crowd from the judges' stand, but, instead of Appleton, he beckoned to the Feedbox Fool. "There's the dickens to pay," he whispered. "Old man Tobin's on the warpath."

"Come on, Tom," Feedbox replied. Both of them went to the loft. Willoughby Tobin paused in a tirade to the judges as they appeared on the steps.

"Here he is, here he is, the rat," he squalled, shaking a fat finger at the Feedbox Fool. "Now let him tell what he knows. Let him tell whether he fixes jockeys to throw horse races for honest men."

The Feedbox Fool winked at Tobin as the last two words came from his mouth.

"We didn't send for you," said one of the judges, addressing Appleton.

"I came on my own hook," Appleton replied, respectfully. "I had a mare win a race out here just now, and I came up to see why her number is not hung out."

"You, you, why—" Tobin could only splutter at the kid.

"Just a minute," said the same judge who had spoken to Appleton. "Feedbox, Mr. Tobin here charges you with fixing his jockey. Says you told his son that Terry Morgan would pull Nitromite. Says you told him to bet on Sweet Lady, a rank outsider. Is that true?"

"It's true that I said those things," admitted Feedbox calmly. "Terry couldn't pull that fire horse. That's a joke. I told your boy that just to make you look like a sucker."

"Look at the finish, look at the finish!" exclaimed Tobin. "Call up the boy, send for Morgan. This tout here has got to be expelled. I'll see that."

"Help yourself, Mr. Tobin," said Feedbox quietly.

"SUPPOSE," suggested one of the judges, "that you explain yourself, Feedbox."

"Glad to, if you'll keep him quiet," agreed the Fool. "Listen, I been at this track fifteen years and never crooked anybody, see? Well, this guy gyped my kid brother, get me? You know about that. The kid got pneumonia and typhoid, and finally he died on account of Mister Tobin. Had him barred, and the kid's been sick ever since. Kicked on me racing a horse at this track under my own name. You know that. And then he doubled the rent on my kid brother and his wife, and him sick and her nursing him. Doubled it, didn't it? With him sick and not able to move."

"What's all this got to do with the race, hey?" yelled Tobin. "Let him tell about the race—cut this string of lies."

"He's getting to the race," interposed one judge.

"Well, then, I got Tom Appleton here to enter my mare for me under his name. He's a tubular heater, see? Mister Tobin's big black horse is in," said the Fool. "At a mile, and a half. That's a long way. So I'm talkin' to Terry Morgan three days ago, see? He's got rheumatism so bad he can hardly lift a cup of coffee to his face. And they put him on a hard-mouthed, heavy-headed runaway horse, get me? All right. And my mare—"

"To blades with your mare!" muttered Tobin.

"My mare," Feedbox said, "is nine years old. Every race she ever run she went faster the last half than the first."

"It seems to be plain enough," said the judge to Tobin. "Your horse ran himself